

## Food Systems Summit 2021: Pre-Summit

H.E. Mr Thongphath Vongmany, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry  
26 or 27 July 2021, 11:30 – 12:30  
Five minutes' Ministerial Statement

*Esteemed Government representatives,*

*Distinguished Ambassadors,*

*Development partner representatives,*

*Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my honour to represent Lao PDR at the Pre-Summit of the Food Systems Summit 2021 today.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR hosted a National Dialogue on June 2<sup>nd</sup> with the aim of creating a national pathway towards more sustainable food systems in the country. With the support of the UN Country Team the event was attended by a wide range of stakeholders including various ministries, government authorities at central and provincial level, development partners, representatives from civil society organizations, NGOs and the private sector.

Moreover, Lao PDR participated in the Asia Pacific Regional Food Systems Summit Dialogues that took place on June 10<sup>th</sup> to gain insights from various national dialogues and to identify opportunities for regional collaboration.

Both dialogues were promising steps towards transforming food systems in Lao PDR and the wider region and we hope to build upon this work. Please let me highlight two insights, which emerged during the National Dialogues in Lao PDR.

Firstly, while discussing the action tracks in panels throughout the day, it became evident that all action tracks have intrinsically linkages to the others. This allowed us to point out synergies and trade-offs between the topics and ultimately to find a balance between competing priorities. For example, major agricultural companies in Lao PDR contribute to greater incomes and employment opportunities but at the same time can threaten the livelihood and very existence of small-scale farmers. This issue needs to be addressed by, for instance, supporting small-scale producers to build their capacity and by ensuring a more equitable access to land.

Whilst the dialogue has helped revitalise and build on existing initiatives, it also presented an opportunity to analyse food systems in a more holistic manner and think of ways to advance the objectives of the five action tracks there are certain trade-offs between different goals.

Secondly, the National Dialogue showed that vulnerable groups such as women and children face the biggest risk of being negatively affected by unsustainable food systems. Therefore, we need to ensure that the 'Leaving No one Behind Principle', as outlined in the 2030 Agenda, is effectively implemented across all initiatives.

I would like to underline that Lao food systems are not isolated and must be understood in connection to regional and international economies.

With this in mind, we are pleased to contribute to the joint statement, from Cambodia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, Viet Nam and Lao PDR which will be presented during the pre-summit. The joint statement highlights the importance of a sustainable agricultural production with a focus on small- and medium-sized farmers and a reduction of chemical pesticides. The statement is also a strong sign for regional cooperation and recognizes the need to act urgently to transition towards more sustainable food systems.

I therefore look forward to this Pre-Summit with great anticipation and take this opportunity to thank all those involved in the organisation of the Pre-Summit; the UN, and especially FAO for coordinating the Dialogue in Lao PDR and wish that today's Pre-Summit may be successful.

Thank you very much.

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